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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Extension of School and Non-Emergency Child Care Program Closures, Continued Steps to Support COVID-19 Response

New measures include deferred student loan payments, updated remote learning guidance and enacting legislation to protect residents from evictions and foreclosures

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today announced new actions to support the ongoing COVID-19 response, including extending the closure of all public and private schools through the end of the school year, and the closure of all non-emergency child care programs until June 29, 2020. The Administration also announced further support for students and families impacted by COVID-19.

Schools and Non-Emergency Child Care Programs: Governor Charlie Baker issued an emergency order extending the closure of all public and private schools through the end of the school year, and the closure of all non-emergency child care programs until June 29, 2020 in an effort to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in the Commonwealth.

- This order expands the [March 25](#) order suspending normal educational operations at schools and non-emergency child care programs. The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) established a process to approve [Exempt Emergency Child Care Programs](#) to serve families of first responders, medical personnel and essential workers.
- Emergency Child Care programs approved by EEC will continue operating. Currently there are 523 emergency child care programs statewide serving families of essential workers. Weekly attendance averages about 2,500 children in these programs across the Commonwealth.
- EEC will continue to pay subsidies to child care providers based on their pre-COVID-19

enrollment, in order to support the workforce.

- The order does not apply to residential special education schools.

Read the Orders here: [K-12 School Order Link](#) | [Child Care Program Link](#)

Child Care Program Resources: The Department of Early Education and Care is reviewing its regulations and funding programs to develop new approaches to incrementally restore child care capacity for family child care and center-based programs in the coming months.

- To support families of essential workers and families with children who have special needs, EEC and Care.com have partnered to assist currently unemployed child care workers and provide skilled in-home care. Care.com is offering both eligible families and child care workers free 90-day premium memberships, accessible [here](#).
- Complementing the existing partnership between WGBH and DESE, EEC is launching further collaboration with WGBH to provide resources and activities for parents with young children.

Remote Learning Resources: The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will issue updated guidelines for schools to support remote learning efforts through the duration of the school year, including expanded STEM learning, and will prepare recommendations to strengthen summer learning opportunities for students.

- DESE has launched a Remote Learning Essentials initiative, focused on addressing access to tools, Internet connectivity, and educator training necessary to enhance remote learning during school closures.
- The department is conducting a survey of school districts to identify barriers that inhibit effective remote learning, including challenges around inequitable access to technology.
- An advisory group of administrators, educators, parents, students and business leaders will engage external partners to mobilize resources for schools, including philanthropic gifts and in-kind contributions.
- DESE will also solicit input from national and local education vendors regarding the potential to create a statewide online education platform for districts to opt into and customize.

STEM Learning: In partnership with EEC, DHE, the STEM Advisory Council and Regional STEM Networks, DESE has established online STEM education resources to provide continued support for remote learning opportunities. This includes virtual STEM learning opportunities for both students and teachers, and is accessible [here](#).

No-Interest Student Loan Program: The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) is deferring scheduled repayments for its No-Interest Loan Program for a duration of four months to support relief efforts during the COVID-19 public health emergency. These deferments will help approximately 12,000 students that participate in the \$5 million program annually funded through the repayment of loans.

- All no-interest loan accounts currently in repayment will automatically be placed in a deferment from April 2020 through July 2020. This deferment will not count toward the program's permissible 36 months of available deferment.
- If a payment has already been made for April, that payment will be applied to the outstanding balance and not refunded. While accounts are in deferment, borrowers who wish to continue monthly payments may do so, without incurring late fees until July 31, 2020.
- Accounts currently 120 days past due will not be placed into collections until August 2020, and regular credit bureau reporting will resume at the end of August.

Eviction and Foreclosure Protections: Yesterday, Governor Baker signed legislation into law to protect homeowners and tenants from eviction and foreclosure. *An Act providing for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID-19 emergency* ensures housing stability for residents and families, and can be read in its entirety [here](#).

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